Colorado Springs Police Department
Standard Operating Procedure

DL-1501-12 Automatic License Plate Reader System

Section 1500 – Assigned Equipment

Effective Date: 5/27/2025
Supersedes Date: 4/11/2025

.01 Purpose

The purpose of this directive is to specify procedures for the use, maintenance, and storage of digital data obtained through an Automated License Plate Reader System (ALPRS).

.02 Cross Reference

GO 400 Employee Conduct
GO 1500 Issuing and Accountability of Police Equipment
GO 1510 Mobile Computer Procedures.

.03 Definitions

Alert (also referred to as a "Hit"): A visual and/or audible alert indicating a potential match between a license plate scanned by the ALPR system and a record from the hot list. A hit does not constitute definitive confirmation that the license plate is of interest; further investigation is required to verify the match.

ALPR Administrator: An individual designated to access, oversee, and manage ALPR data, ensuring its appropriate use and compliance with relevant procedures.

ALPR-Generated Data: All data captured by the ALPR system, including the location, date, and time of a scanned license plate, as well as any digital photographic images of the license plate and vehicle generated by the LPR equipment.

Automated License Plate Reader System (ALPRS): A system comprising LPR cameras, computers, and software designed to automatically capture and interpret the characters on vehicle license plates. The collected may be cross-referenced with a list of license plates relevant to law enforcement, such as those associated with investigations or enforcement actions.

Flock: ALPR technology on public roadways which can capture vehicle license plates and other identifying characteristics that may or may not be unique to the vehicle. Those characteristics include but are not limited to make, model, color, date, time, location, and direction of travel. Flock technology can detect unique characteristics such as decals, top racks, back racks, and toolboxes attached to the vehicle.

Hot List: A specialized database containing items of significant interest to law enforcement, including but not limited to, the Terrorist Screening Center Watch List, stolen or wanted vehicles, missing or wanted persons, license plates linked to AMBER and Silver Alerts, and other law enforcement-specific watch lists.

Relevant Evidence: Per the District Attorney's Office, relevant evidence is "evidence that has any tendency to make the existence of any fact that is important to the determination of the action more probable or less probable than it would be without the evidence." In other words, relevant evidence is anything the helps prove or disprove a fact of consequence in case, or that may be considered inculpatory or exculpatory to an investigation.

.04 Procedure

The Automatic License Plate Reader Program is designed to assist and enhance law enforcement's ability to detect violations of law, recover stolen property, apprehend fugitives, and assist with investigations. The Colorado Springs Police Department (CSPD) has both vehicle-mounted and stationary ALPRS.

ALPRS use specialized cameras and software that recognize license plates through mounted cameras that interface with processors to capture, interpret, and record license plates, while actively comparing the data to an established list of vehicles of interest.

Mobile ALPRS allows officers to read parked, oncoming, passing, and overtaken vehicle plates automatically. The processor is programmed to read plates from all 50 states and Canada and is functional in all types of weather. The system is limited only by the number of plates that can pass in front of the camera. It should be noted that ALPRS will alert the officer to a possible match. It is the officer's responsibility to verify the information.

A key use of ALPRS is the recovery of stolen vehicles, although they can identify vehicles associated with other crimes. The ALPRS should be deployed as much as possible in the field to collect data and recover stolen vehicles.

Officers deploying a vehicle with an ALPRS may be asked to assist with major criminal incidents by collecting data from license plates, which could be used later in the investigation, or manually entering license plates into their ALPRS to locate suspect vehicles.

Vehicles captured by Flock Safety ALPRS are in a searchable database which includes photos taken of the vehicle and license plate (if a license plate is on the vehicle) which can be searched by law enforcement to identify potential vehicles of interest in investigations/calls for service.

ALPRS Check Out

Patrol officers will follow the proper procedures for checking out vehicles at their respective patrol divisions in accordance with the Quartermaster OnQ system. ALPRS assigned to the Metro Division will be assigned by the unit sergeants at the discretion of the Metro lieutenant.

Field Use

ALPRS receives information from statewide and/or national law enforcement databases to establish "hot lists" for vehicle license plate hits.

When an alert on a license plate is received from a vehicle mounted system, the ALPRS will display a photograph of the vehicle license plate that was read and information on what the alert was for (stolen motor vehicle, felony warrant, sex offender, stolen license plates, etc.).

When utilizing the ALPRS at night, the photo of the license plate will be clear, but the photo of the vehicle may not be clear. To enhance the capabilities of viewing the vehicle in the software, it may be helpful to utilize alley lights in parking lots at night, which has been effective in obtaining better photos of the vehicle.

Personnel utilizing the ALPRS must verify the information captured. The information must be corroborated and confirmed to establish probable cause or reasonable suspicion before contacting the vehicle occupants or taking enforcement action.

The proactive data entry, except as outlined in this directive, or the access to ALPRS records must have a specific criminal nexus or law enforcement purpose. A case number or call for service number must be entered at the time of a search of an ALPRS.

Stationary ALPRS will be monitored and maintained by the Metro Division. CSPD personnel will be granted access to ALPRS after proper account activation and completion of the appropriate training modules. The number of personnel with access to these systems may be limited based on available licenses and job duties.

ALPRS Data Collection

General Guidelines

ALPRS data is not personally identifiable information. A license plate number identifies a specific vehicle, not a specific person. Although a license plate number may be linked or otherwise associated with an identifiable person, this potential can only be realized through a distinct, separate step. Absent this extra step, the license plate number and the time and location data attached to it are not personally identifying. Thus, even though ALPRS automate the collection of license plate numbers, it is the investigation process that identifies individuals.

ALPRS Data Query

ALPRS collects data from various governmental and private entities utilizing these systems. The system can search license plates, partial license plates, and capture the date, time, and locations where the license plate was captured by the ALPRS. This use of data is intended to assist patrol officers and investigators in official investigations. Access to this data will be limited to designated personnel, who have been provided with account access to conduct authorized ALPRS stored data queries.

ALPRS Training

Personnel will read all General Orders and SOPs related to ALPRS and sign off on them in Power DMS before using any LPR system.

Personnel will complete Flock training and certification on the Flock website and send their training and documentation to the Flock Administrator.

ALPRS Installation and Data Collection

Divisional ALPRS system maintenance and installation will be the responsibility of the designated Metro Division Lieutenant. The Metro Technology Officer can assist with setting up a new laptop specifically for the ELSAG system. Systems assigned to the Metro Division will be installed and maintained by the designated Metro Lieutenant or their designee.

ALPRS Data Retention

Retention of ALPRS data will be stored in the appointed server for no more than twelve (12) months before it is purged. When data has become evidence as part of an investigation, the applicable data should be downloaded from the server and placed into evidence by the investigating officer. Investigating officers should not assume that ALPRS data will be stored by the system, and will download searches when they are used and become relevant in individual cases as described in this section..

Ensuring appropriate retention of ALPRS data is the responsibility of the assigned Crime Analysis Unit Supervisor.

FLOCK

The use of Flock cameras has proven beneficial to criminal investigations. To ensure that the prosecution and the defense have access to all relevant evidence in court for a fair trial, personnel using the Flock system will comply with the following:

The Colorado Springs Police Department (CSPD) employs retroactive searches to assist in solving crimes after they have occurred. Additionally, the department leverages real-time alerts for hotlist vehicles, enabling the identification of wanted criminals and the recovery of stolen vehicles.

Flock Safety data is retained for **thirty (30) days**, with an audit trail of user access to the system stored indefinitely. The audit trail contains the following information: User name, networks, time frame, license plate, case number, filters, reason, and may contain search time.

Alerts are generated for hotlist hits, including stolen vehicles, wanted suspects, and missing persons, based on entries in CCIC/NCIC, NCMEC/Amber Alert, attempt to locate, carjacking, felony warrant, local warrant, misdemeanor warrant, reported lost, sexual offender, stolen plate, used in a felony, used in a misdemeanor; NCIC: CPIC date records, extreme risk protection order, gang or suspected terrorist, immigration violator, supervised release, violent person, warrants.

A Flock hit alone is not considered enough information to establish probable cause.

Before any enforcement action is taken, law enforcement personnel must verify the license plates of all vehicles of interest and cross-reference them with the CCIC/NCIC databases.

Each search result should be evaluated according to the totality of circumstances.

Additional research must be done to confirm the vehicle located on the Flock hit is the vehicle involved in your investigation. This can include the observation of distinct vehicle traits and damage, partial license plates, bumper stickers, etc.

Officer Reports

When an ALPRS is used to generate leads in an investigation that results in the identification of a suspect, vehicle, or other relevant details, and an arrest appears imminent, personnel will document the investigative process involving the use of the ALPRS to identify either inculpatory or exculpatory evidence. For instance, if a vehicle is identified as a suspect in a robbery using

Flock, the personnel utilizing the system will document the methodology used to search for the vehicle and the specific steps taken to narrow the search to identify the vehicle. This documentation will include a summary of information obtained and general steps taken during the search process that led to the vehicle identification, which will be outlined in the case report or supplemental report.

Specifically, officers using ALPRS in their investigations will utilize Axon evidence.com, "Record and Share" to document the process and the steps an investigator takes to narrow the search parameters. This is a screen recording program that will directly import the actions an investigator has taken visually into evidence.com.

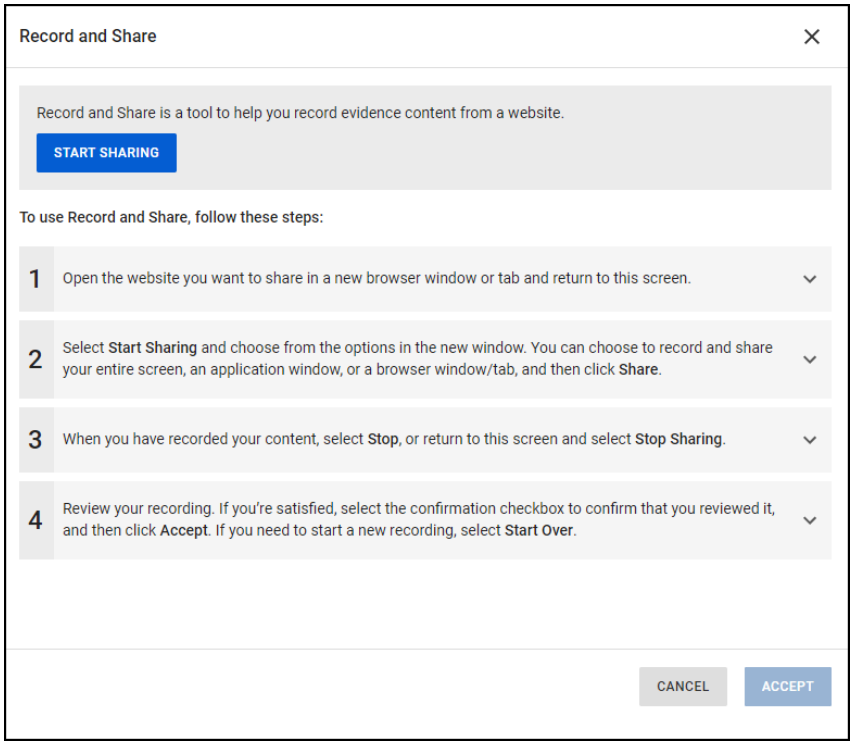
There are limitations to the "Record and Share" feature: The maximum file size is 4 Gigabytes, the entire screen, window, or tab must be selected.

1. On the menu bar, click **Evidence** and then under the search filters, click **Import Evidence**.

The Import Evidence page appears.

1. To record website content, click **Record and Share**.

    - A panel on the right side of the page. In the same browser type open a new browser window or tab and go to the website you want to record.



- Click **Start Sharing**, select the window or tab to record, and if audio should be recorded.

- When you are ready to stop recording, click **Stop** in the selected tab/window or **Stop Sharing** in the panel.

- You can add a Title, Evidence ID, and Category, as needed. Once you are ready to accept the recording, select the check box and click **Accept**.

Repeat this step to record other content.

2. Once the files are added, you can edit the Title, ID and Category information individually for each file. You can also edit the IDs and Categories for all the imported evidence or select and edit the IDs and Categories for specific files using the Edit All IDs and Edit All Categories options.

    - Tag and Classify the video as appropriate with incident number and retention category.
      If at the time of capture it is unknown if the search is going to be related to an incident that generates a case report utilize the CAD Incident number and retention category:
      : Non-Criminal Incident – All
      Users can update the retention category once the incident becomes a case.

3. Click **Upload**

Reports will also contain specific information about how officers verified or corroborated that the vehicle identified was actually involved, including follow up investigation(s) or evidence.

Officers will include the following written language in their report:

Investigation in this case included the use of an ALPRS (Automated License Plate Reader System), which is a system comprising of cameras, computers, and software designed to capture and interpret characters on vehicle license plates. A version of an ALPRS is Flock, which is a system that can capture vehicle license plates and other identifying characteristics of a vehicle. These characteristics can include, but are not limited to: vehicle make, vehicle color, date, time, location, direction of travel and even unique characteristics like window stickers, top racks, back racks, or items like toolboxes.

Information captured in the Flock system is searchable in a database. This search produces “hits” or results based on the filters manually selected during the search. The results include photos of vehicle license plates and other time/location data.

Use of these systems requires officers to enter search filters. This means the system will exclude vehicles that do not match the search filter requirements. Excluded vehicle data is not saved. Officers using these systems understand that vehicles are excluded from the results and officers will use other investigative tools to corroborate or confirm that any identified vehicle is correct.

This process will ensure that the investigative steps taken are properly documented and available for discovery when the case is filed with the District Attorney's Office.

Report Approval by Supervisors

Supervisors approving reports and warrants will ensure that the Flock verbiage included in this document is contained in the report. If personnel fail to include it, the report should either be rejected or, if it is an in-custody case, an additional supplemental report should be completed with the Flock verbiage included.

Usage Limitations

All ALPRS are intended for use in criminal and traffic investigations. Use is restricted to these purposes. No employee may use or authorize the use of the equipment or database records for any other reason. Improper usage of the ALPRS will subject the personnel involved to disciplinary action and loss of database access.